

Equal Opportunities Policy

Compass Disability Services

Units 11 – 12 Belvedere Trading Estate
Taunton TA1 1BH

February 2009
Review Date: February 2012

Introduction

Compass Disability Services is committed to identifying and eliminating all forms of discrimination, providing equal opportunities to all, promoting diversity throughout our organisation, and encouraging all persons to treat each other with respect.

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination can be direct or indirect.

Direct discrimination occurs when one person is treated less favourably than another on grounds relating to age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, race or religion/belief.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a requirement is imposed which can be complied with by a smaller proportion of persons of a particular age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, race or religion/belief, than persons in another group and which is not objectively justifiable in the given situation.

Examples of indirect discrimination:

- Demanding technical qualifications for a job which are not strictly necessary, or
- Sending only full-time employees on training courses

Policy Statement

The aim of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all. To ensure that no person or groups of people employed by, applying for jobs with, or in receipt of services from Compass Disability Services will be directly or indirectly discriminated against because of:

- race, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion/belief or political belief
- gender or gender reassignment
- sexual orientation
- marital or civil partnership status
- disability
- age

Date updated: 03/03/2011	By whom: Paula Ingrey	Version number: 2
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- domestic responsibilities
- class or social background
- part-time or full-time employment status
- temporary, permanent or fixed-term contract status
- or unrelated criminal offences

Compass Disability Services will actively use its influence to promote understanding and harmony between diverse persons and groups of people. We will work with other agencies and organisations to eliminate discrimination, harassment and abuse. We are committed not only to our legal obligations but also to the positive promotion of equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment, service delivery and partnership working.

Service Delivery

Compass Disability Services will ensure that, in all service delivery planning and commitment, care is taken to provide services of equal quality to all service users. We will endeavour to eliminate unintentional discrimination in the way we provide information and services.

Recruitment & Promotion

Advertisements for posts will give sufficiently clear and accurate information to enable potential applicants to assess their own suitability. Compass Disability Service is a recognised 'two-ticks' employer and we are committed to increasing the diversity of our workforce, through improving access to under-represented groups.

We will actively monitor the recruitment and promotion paths of all employees in a way which will allow equality of opportunity. Any promotion will be based on merit alone. Where it is necessary to ask questions relating to personal circumstances, these will be related purely to the job and asked to all candidates. Employment practices, including the writing of job descriptions/person specifications, interviewing and decision-making criteria, will be reviewed annually to ensure that bias and discrimination are eliminated.

Compass Disability Services will embrace flexible employment practices in line with statutory requirements as set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Employment Act 2002), and Work and Families Act 2006. In addition, we recognise that employees' circumstances may change over time and are therefore committed to adapting working practices where possible. We will ensure that requests for changes to working practices will be treated on an individual basis. Compass Disability Services recognises the skills and expertise of its employees and understands the need to retain them.

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Staff Training & Professional Development

In accordance with the above, formal and informal professional development opportunities, in-service training and qualifications will be equally accessible to all. All employees will be encouraged to discuss training needs/opportunities and career prospects with their line manager.

Trustees and managers will undertake training opportunities, where necessary, to develop understanding of managing diversity including what constitutes discrimination and anti-discrimination measures.

All employees will attend training programmes that will increase their knowledge/skills and understanding of attitudes to work within a diverse society. Such training will include skills to challenge deliberate and unintentional discriminatory practice.

Training regarding this policy is incorporated into the induction programme for every new member of staff. Further training will be provided as necessary to all members of staff, including managers, in accordance with changes in statutory legislation or as the policy is reviewed.

Code of Behaviour

All staff are expected to be familiar with the equal opportunities policy and to conduct themselves accordingly.

It is acknowledged that discrimination and harassment may occur unintentionally due to a general lack of understanding. However it is essential that a culture in which positive challenge to inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour is part of normal practice.

Harassment & Victimisation

Any deliberate act of discrimination by any employee in the course of their duty will be treated as a disciplinary offence, as set out in the Disciplinary Policy.

Acts of deliberate discrimination by volunteers or any external organisations will be taken seriously and the organisation will ensure that a full investigation takes place and appropriate action is taken.

Any complaints of discrimination against an employee will be pursued through Compass Disability Services' Grievance Procedure.

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Monitoring

Compass Disability Services' is fully committed to incorporating this policy into everyday practices and procedures throughout the organisation. Monitoring will be rigorous – informed by our Equalities Action Plan, and continual through employees, service users, volunteers and partners being vigilant and encouraged to be vocal.

Responsibilities

Compass Disability Services recognises our legal responsibilities to comply with statutory legislation (see Appendix 1).

Ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this equal opportunities policy rests with the Board of Trustees, and for ensuring that the policy is reviewed and kept inline with current legislation.

The Chief Executive is responsible for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of this policy and for ensuring that all managers are aware of the policy and are adhering to their responsibilities.

All managers must take responsibility for ensuring that employees under their supervision are made aware of and understand this policy. Managers are responsible for taking appropriate action if any conduct that is not in compliance with this policy is reported to them. Managers must also ensure their own behaviour and conduct models best practice at all times.

All employees have a role to play in promoting equality and taking responsibility for ensuring their own behaviour and actions comply with and support this policy.

Policy Revisions

This policy will be reviewed every three years and amended as necessary, or earlier in accordance with any forthcoming legislation. The Equal Opportunities Action Plan will be reviewed and rewritten annually. All employees should pass suggestions or recommendations for the revision of any aspect of the policy through normal channels to the Chief Executive.

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Legal Responsibilities

Compass Disability Services recognises our legal responsibilities to comply with the following statutory legislation:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Equal Pay Act (Amendment) Regulations 1983
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- The Race Relations Act (Amendment) Regulations 2003
- Sex Discrimination Act (Amendment) Regulations 2003
- Disability Discrimination Act (Amendment) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Employment Equality (Sexual Discrimination) Regulations 2005
- Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Equality Act 2006
- Work and Families Act 2006
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007